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**STATEMENT BY U.S. TRADE REPRESENTATIVE CHARLENE BARSHEFSKY
REGARDING FTAA TRADE NEGOTIATIONS**

United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky today announced that the Fourth FTAA Trade Ministers provided a solid foundation for a comprehensive and successful launch of substantive negotiations at the Santiago Summit. Following the meeting of Trade Ministers representing thirty-four countries, Ambassador Barshefsky issued the following statement:

“The United States achieved all of its key objectives here, setting the stage for a comprehensive and successful launch of substantive negotiations at the Santiago Summit. We have set a strong foundation for negotiations and we have made important progress on labor and environmental issues with the FTAA. Keep in mind the central fact behind this effort: Our market is open to other countries’ products -- other countries’ markets should be open to ours. The average tariff in the rest of Latin America is four times as high as ours.

“Our efforts in Costa Rica move us an important step forward toward the President’s and other leaders’ vision of a hemispheric free trade agreement by 2005. An open and fair trading system in this hemisphere will benefit American workers, companies, and consumers.

“The United States, led by President Clinton, has been the driving force for open markets in our Hemisphere and around the world. In the FTAA, the Hemisphere looks to us for leadership. We will continue to play a central leadership role, and the San Jose outcomes reflect this fact. Specifically, today’s meeting cements a number of critical U.S. objectives:

- “Establishing Miami as the negotiating center for the first three years of FTAA negotiations. Miami was not only the site for the first leaders’ meeting, it is also the hub

for the United States' trade with Latin America.

- “Ensuring U.S. leadership throughout the entire negotiation period, with the United States co-chairing with Brazil the FTAA process during the crucial closing period of the negotiations.
- “Establishing, for the first time ever, a committee to expand the involvement of environmental, labor and academic groups and to examine these issues within the FTAA process itself. This is a major step forward and clearly establishes that all stakeholders will have direct access to the FTAA process, through ministerial consideration of all views.
- “Creating nine working groups for trade negotiations which play to America's strengths, including agriculture, market access, services, and, importantly, intellectual property rights.
- “We now have a formula that provides in a single undertaking the framework for one final, comprehensive deal that gives the United States leverage to break down the most pernicious trade barriers in the region.
- “Recommitting FTAA countries to make concrete process by the year 2000. Specifically, Ministers called for agreements on business facilitation in such areas as customs procedures, professional services, and IPR by the turn of the century.
- “Building an awareness of the importance of duty free cyberspace. We have established an expert government-private sector working group that will make recommendations at our next FTAA meeting. We continue to pursue this agenda simultaneously in the WTO, where the largest players have signed on to our approach.”